Melody Maker

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LENNON SPEAKS —but only just!

REPORT ON A BIZARRE HAPPENING IN TOKYO, BY MICHAEL WATTS

JOHN LENNON is officially semi-retired, and will not perform or record for at least another year.

He told a press conference at the Hotel Okura here last Tuesday that he and Yoko Ono wanted to devote their time to their son, Sean Ono Lennon.

"We've basically decided, without a great decision, to be with our baby as much as we can until we feel we can take the time off to indulge ourselves in creating things outside the family," Lennon announced.

"Maybe when he's three, four or five, then we'll think about creating something else other than the child."

The Lennons have been in Japan since May, and one of the purposes of their visit was to show the child, now about two years old, to his in-laws. Lennon took his stay so seriously that he enrolled in a Japanese language course in New York before he went.

The press conference, at which the Melody Maker was the only Western paper present, was called just before their return to New York, which will continue to be their main home. Lennon later told me that their only motive was to thank the Japanese people for respecting their privacy whilst there.

Although perceptibly nervous, he looked in tremendous physical shape. Wearing an expensive black, two-piece suit, with a white shirt and pearl-grey tie, and with his hair in a smart, conventional cut, he sat beside Yoko, who translated and did most of the talking. Incense burned, and an incongruous note was struck by a radio somewhere in the penthouse suite playing "You Are My Sunshine."

I was forbidden to ask direct questions, and after the conference Lennon remained friendly but non-committal. "We really have nothing to say," he explained.

The Japanese questions were hardly penetrating, however. Many of them concerned the death of Elvis Presley.

"Elvis died when he went into the Army," Lennon replied. "Up until he joined the Army I thought it was beautiful music, and Elvis was for me and my generation what the Beatles were to the Sixties. I basically became a musician because of Elvis Presley."

"I never did concerts to influence people," he answered one questioner. "I did them for many reasons. And since 1966 I have not performed for money, only for charity."

Responding, therefore, to a question about the Beatles reviving, he replied: "I doubt it very much."

Lennon was also asked about punk rock, and seemed very out-of-touch with music of the past year.

After almost 45 tentative minutes, Lennon and Yoko closed the shop, and all that Lennon would add later was that he would be coming to Britain "at some point." He appeared unconcerned both about returning and about recording again. His last album, "Rock 'n' Roll," was released a couple of years ago. Nor would he comment on the fact that his contract has now ended with EMI.

The birth of the child and the atmosphere of Japan seem to have made him remarkably contented. "Basically, I'm now a Zen pagan," he said. Perhaps that explains it.

Win Lizzy seats

THE DENIM hordes have been on the streets of Britain pounding their way to the box offices to get their hands on a commodity as rare and as valuable as gold-dust —THIN LIZZY tickets.

● Box office managers have been reporting massive queues as Lizzy fans waited through wind and rain for their chance to see one of the country's most successful live and album bands.

Extra concerts fixed

● Extra concerts have been added to mop up some of the demand. But with tickets still in short supply, the Melody Maker comes to the rescue for some lucky fans of the band led by Phil Lynott, pictured here.

● Today the MM runs a contest for readers to win tickets for the Lizzy concerts up and down the country. All you have to do to enter is turn to page 13.

● As the band's albums continue their way up the charts of Britain and America — "Bad Reputation," the new Lizzy album, has just gone silver in the UK while lodging in the US chart at number 53, and its predecessor, "Jailbreak" has just gone gold in America — four new dates have been added to the forthcoming British tour.

● Shows have been added at LIVERPOOL Empire on November 17 and BRISTOL Colston Hall on November 27. Two dates have been arranged at LONDON's Lewisham Odeon on December 13 and 14 to cope with the extra demand that sold out Hammersmith Odeon on December 10 and 11.